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ABSTRACT

The brochure is intended to help local school districts in Washington State design and implement programs for highly capable students. Included are a statement of Philosophy of Services, goals of such programs, a definition of "highly capable students," Information on identification of this population covers nomination, screening, assessment, and selection. Other discussion considers how Washington State supports these programs, what teaching strategies are most appropriate, teacher qualifications, and parent involvement. Also included are listings of national and state organizations, colleges and universities offering coursework in gifted education, and suggested print resources. (DB)

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PROGRAMS FOR HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS IN WASHINGTON STATE

INTRODUCTION

Realization of each individual's potential, the opportunity to learn at one's own rate, and encouragement to assume increasing responsibility for one's own education are all major goals of education today. The desire to reach these goals for all students has led to the development of programs that will reach every segment of our school population. In an effort to meet these goals the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has initiated programs to serve highly capable students in Washington State. Providing the opportunity for appropriate education for these highly capable students is the goal of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Frank B. Brouillet
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

March, 1985

In their 1983 report, A Nation At Risk, the National Commission on Excellence in Education stated:

> We define "excellence" to mean several related things. At the level of the individual learner, it means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace. Excellence characterizes a school or college that sets high expectations and goals for all learners, then tries in every way possible to help students reach them. Excellence characterizes a society that has adopted these policies, for it will then be prepared through the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Washington State's program for highly capable students is designed to help those students perform "on the boundary of individual ability" as they strive for excellence as defined by the National Commission.

This brochure provides information to help local school districts in carrying out their programs for highly capable students. These suggestions do not replace state rules and regulations, and should not be construed as statements of additional state policy.

Statutory authority and rules and regulations governing this program can be found in RCW 28A.16 and WAC 392-170.

WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICES TO HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS?

In 1985, the Washington State Board of Education identified the mission of common schools: "...to assure learning experiences to help all children develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes fundamental to achieving individual statisfaction and to becoming responsible, contributing citizens in this rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world." Students in all of Washington's schools, then, should have access to educational opportunities that respect individual abilities and learning styles.

The State of Washington, through 1984 enabling legislation (RCW 28A.16), provides educational opportunities for highly capable children. These programs, designed to meet students' individual needs, can provide maximum challenge to these students' intellectual and creative abilities, as well as preparing them to accept their full responsiblity in our democratic society.

PROGRAMS FOR HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS

— GOALS —

1. To raise the awareness and involvement of the public and to increase the knowledge level and commitment of the educational community—including school board members, administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents—of the special needs of highly capable students.
2. To provide appropriate programs for all highly capable students in the state, programs which will enable them to develop their unique and exceptional abilities.
3. To stimulate research and evaluation for the development, implementation, and continuation of programs and services for highly capable students.

HOW DOES WASHINGTON STATE DEFINE "HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS"?

In Washington State, a highly capable student is one who demonstrates superior intellectual ability in one or more of the following ways:

1. Cognitive ability, including thinking, reasoning, problem solving, verbal comprehension, and numerical facility;
2. Specific academic achievement in one or more major content areas;
3. Exceptional creativity, as evidenced by the demonstration of unique or outstanding creative products and/or the demonstration of unusual problem solving ability or other behavioral characteristics that indicate the intellectual potential for advanced academic performance.

HOW ARE HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS IDENTIFIED?

A multi-faceted approach to identification is based on thoughtful consideration of the characteristics of these students. Just as there are wide differences between highly capable students and other students in learning speed, power of thought, intellectual drive, and curiosity, so, too, are there differences among highly capable students themselves. A comprehensive identification process must assess the individual patterns of performance which distinguish highly capable students from the rest of the student population, as well as from each other.

Some of the educationally significant traits which influence the choice of an appropriate learning environment and curriculum for highly capable students are:

— Superior ability and early development of language, reading and other symbolic skills.

— Rapid, efficient learning of fact and principle with superior retention, recall and insight into the relationship between old and new information.

— A greater capacity for abstract thinking as evidenced in superior ability to reason, to generalize, to classify and to organize.

— Resourcefulness and productivity demonstrated by original and unusual solutions to problems.

Some highly capable students exhibit all of these traits and teachers have no trouble recognizing them. Other students have unique and diverse patterns of performance and are not so easily identified. Recognizing and encouraging all of these talented students will allow them to realize their potential.

The four steps in the standard identification process allow a systematic approach to identification, screening, assessment and selection of students for programs.

Nomination—School districts use a variety of nominating procedures to identify a group of students for further assessment. Nominations should be accepted from teachers, parents, peers and members of the community. In addition, nominations may be based on analysis of student products, general achievement tests, or classroom surveys completed by teachers.

Screening—Districts may apply preliminary screening procedures to the group of nominated students in order to reduce the number involved in further assessment. Screening procedures may eliminate students for whom there exists clear, current evidence that the student will not qualify as highly capable.

Assessment—Nominated students, unless eliminated through preliminary screening, should be assessed using a minimum of one measure for each of the multiple criteria listed under the definition. Students who are selected for the program for the highly capable must demonstrate at least one of the following characteristics:

1. Score in the top ten percent in cognitive ability on a standardized ability test;
2. Score in the top five percent in one or more specific academic achievement area(s); and/or
3. Behavioral characteristics that demonstrate exceptional creativity.

Special consideration must be given to identifying those students who do not perform well on screening or individual assessment because of a handicap or educational disadvantage. A qualified practitioner who has the training to interpret cognitive and achievement tests should review the test results of nominated students. In those cases where specific test results do not appear to reflect accurately a student's actual ability, professional judgement should be used in determining cognitive ability or academic achievement.

Selection—Final selection of the most highly capable students for participation in the district's program offerings must be determined by a multidisciplinary committee which includes a classroom teacher, a psychologist or other qualified practitioner trained in test interpretation, a district administrator with responsibility for supervision of the district's program for highly capable students, and any additional professionals the district deems desireable. Selection of students should be based on professional judgment of which students will benefit most from inclusion in the district's program, as well as on a system that considers the multiple criteria in determining which students are the most highly capable in the district. Professional judgment should be utilized in cases where test scores are not available for individual students.

Identification of highly capable students must respect the unique abilities and interests of students found in all cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups and, in addition, promote access to excellence in education for all highly capable individuals.

HOW SHOULD PROGRAMS SERVE HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS?

Programs for highly capable students should provide an optimal match between the unique needs and capabilities of each student and the program options available in the school district. Program options might include specialized self-contained classrooms or resource room groupings, subject matter or grade level acceleration, honors or advanced classes, after school programs, mentorships, special workshops or seminars, specific provisions for differentiated instruction in the context of the regular classrooms, or other programs designed by the school district. Districts might also consider programs available in adjoining districts or in institutions of higher learning when attempting to formulate an optimal match for an individual highly capable learner.

HOW DOES WASHINGTON STATE SUPPORT THESE PROGRAMS?

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has provided leadership at the state level in developing programs for Washington's highly capable students. Through the Superintendent's office, local school districts can receive both direct inservice training for their professional staff and for parents, and technical assistance in program development. This program support results from state funding of categorical programs for direct service to students.

Additional support for programs and services is available through the local school districts, educational service districts, colleges and universities, and other statewide agencies that are listed at the end of this pamphlet.

WHAT TEACHING STRATEGIES ARE MOST APPROPRIATE?

Highly capable students, whether taught in a regular classroom or in a special program, need specialized curricula. The curricula should focus on accelerated or advanced content, and stress organizing principles, structures, and concepts that underlie major disciplines.

Instructional strategies should:

- Teach to higher cognitive levels through questioning techniques and assignments that stimulate and focus on higher level thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- Encourage the development of new and original ideas by promoting critical thinking and fostering creativity.
- Emphasize the active involvement of the learner by encouraging independent study skills and self-selection of resources and material.
- Encourage the development of high quality products that stretch the student's thinking, learning, and creative productivity.

WHO TEACHES THESE STUDENTS AND WHAT PREPARATION IS NEEDED?

The two keys to quality programs for highly capable students are the learning environment and the teacher. The environment should convey the excitement and vitality of the learning process. It should be a place of physical and personal warmth, and it should be a highly verbal place where the interchange of ideas and information is encouraged. Teachers who direct these programs should have the experience, training, and competencies to create such an environment and to work with these especially able students.

At the present time, many colleges and universities offer classes in theory and curriculum development for highly capable students. School districts, too, frequently offer inservice education opportunities to their instructional staff.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Office of Programs for Highly Capable Students, encourage more educational institutions to include proficiency in teaching highly capable students in their teacher training programs. The continuation of inservice opportunities through colleges, universities, and local school districts is likewise encouraged to build the skills of those educators who are engaged in designing programs for highly capable students.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents play a crucial role in the planning, development, and evaluation of local programs for highly capable students. Students in programs need their parents' support and the support of the broader community in their pursuit of excellence in education. Parents should be involved in the decision-making processes that involve identification, and in program changes of their children's educational programs.

Parents and other members of the community can involve themselves in education for highly capable students by donating their time and special talents to their districts' programs. They can volunteer their time to work with district staff, especially teachers, in implementing programs that will enhance the quality of education for these students. A particularly effective means of working with local districts is for parents to organize a support group for the highly capable student program.

Other significant contributions parents make are in the area of their own parenting skills. Parents wishing to encourage optimal development of a highly capable child should:

- allow trial and error
- promote novel ideas and solutions
- encourage goal-setting by the child
- give honest feedback
- allow opportunities for playful experiences
- model these behaviors

Communication between the home and the school is another important factor in helping highly capable children use and develop their abilities. Parents should contact their school district(s) for information about programs for highly capable students and maintain close contact with the teachers and administrators in the district(s) program.

Other agencies and organizations can also assist parents in learning more about gifted education. The following page contains a list of such organizations.

ORGANIZATIONS

NATIONAL

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) — TAG Division
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
217 Gregory Drive
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

STATE

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Division of Special Services and Professional Programs
Old Capitol Building
MS FG-11
Olympia, Washington 98504

CENTRUM
P.O. Box 1158
Fort Worden State Park
Port Townsend, Washington 98368

*A center that provides workshops in creativity for gifted students in the performing and creative arts.

Northwest Gifted Child Association (NWGCA)
P.O. Box 1226
Bellevue, Washington 98009

*A resource that provides consultant help, publications and support for gifted education.

Washington Association of Educators of the Gifted and Talented (WAETAG)
Educational Service District 121
1410 South 200th Street
Seattle, Washington 98148

*A statewide professional organization for teachers, administrators and other professionals concerned with highly capable students; provides publications, conferences, and a network for educators of gifted students.

Washington Coalition for Gifted Education
P.O. Box 1226
Bellevue, Washington 98009

*An organization for political advocacy for gifted education.

Whitworth College Gifted Education Center
Spokane, Washington 99251

*Provides college classes, inservice training and consultant help for gifted education in eastern Washington.

Child Development Research Group
Guthrie Annex II, NI-20
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

*Provides a comprehensive set of services for highly capable children and their families including a Diagnostic and Counseling Service, the Transition School and Early Entrance Program for academically able students, summer classes, and the Talent Search for junior high students.

Educational Service Districts — Nine regional ESDs throughout the state provide a focal point for coordination, leadership and resource information.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OFFERING COURSEWORK IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Contact Person(s)

1. Central Washington University
   Ellensburg, Washington 98926

   Dr. Dorothy Sheldon
   Dr. Elizabeth Nesselroad
   Dr. Darwin Goodey

2. Eastern Washington University
   Cheney, Washington 99004

   Dr. Bruce Mitchell

3. Washington State University
   Pullman, Washington 99164

   Dr. Dennis Warner

4. Pacific Lutheran University
   Tacoma, Washington 98447

   Dr. Jane Williamson
   Dr. Judy Carr

5. University of Washington
   Seattle, Washington 98195

   Dr. Maurice Freehill
   Dr. Mildred E. Kersh

6. Seattle Pacific University
   Seattle, Washington 98119

   Dr. Al Haugerud

7. Western Washington University
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dr. Marie Eaton

For parents interested in further information about programs contact:

Dr. Frank B. Brouillet
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
MS FG-11
Olympia, Washington 98504

RESOURCES

Publications

Clark, Barbara. Growing Up Gifted. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1979.

A comprehensive book on all aspects of giftedness. Includes rationale and suggestions for program development for gifted children with different types of talents.

Delp, Jeanne L. and Martinson, Ruth A. The Gifted and Talented: A Handbook for Parents. Ventura, California: Ventura County Superintendent of Schools, 1974.

A well-organized approach to assisting parents in understanding and helping their gifted child.

Gallagher, James J. Teaching the Gifted Child, 3rd edition. Rockleigh, New Jersey: Allyn and Bacon, 1985.

Contains excellent discussion of the definition of "giftedness" and of identification of the gifted, curriculum and curriculum modification for gifted students, problem solving and creativity, administration and training for the gifted, and the gifted underachiever and culturally different gifted. The third edition of a basic book on gifted education.

Long, Margo. Small District Programs for Gifted and Talented Students, and Teaching the Gifted in the Regular Classroom: A Program Option for Small Districts. Seattle, Washington: Northwest Clearinghouse for Gifted Education, 1983. (ESD 121, 1410 S. 200th St., Seattle, WA 98148)

These companion booklets offer a unique resource to program developers in small school districts. The first booklet describes the complete program development process, and includes an annotated list of 24 program options. The second booklet outlines a step-by-step process to implement a program to reach gifted students in the regular classroom.

Maker, June. Curriculum Development for the Gifted. Rockville, Maryland: An Aspen Publication, 1972.

A step-by-step guide for modifying the curriculum in content, process, product, and learning environment. Includes worksheets for planning and suggestions for special groups of gifted students including highly creative, culturally different, and so on.

Wesco Manual. Seattle, Washington: Northwest Clearinghouse for Gifted Education, 1982. (ESD 121, 1410 S. 200th St., Seattle, WA 98148)

A complete manual of resource materials developed by gifted education consultants in Washington, Oregon, and California. Developed for consultants and program coordinators, the guide includes sections on consulting skills, awareness, needs assessment, planning and management decisions, identification of student needs, counseling and guidance, curriculum and instruction development, staff development, and evaluation.

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